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Still No Answers, or Peace, for Many Rape Victims

Nurfika Osman & Ulma Haryanto | May 14, 2010



During the mayhem of May 1998, countless women were brutally raped. To this day, the government has not brought the perpetrators to justice, nor has it effectively addressed sexual violence. (Photo courtesy of Wikipedia)

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The National Commission on Violence Against Women lamented the fact that while the gang rapes that occurred during the May 1998 riots had highlighted the need to change the Criminal Code, 12 years on there had still been no progress.

Sri Nurherawati, from the recovery division at the commission, known as Komnas Perempuan, said on Thursday that the country's Criminal Code limited the definition of rape to penetration of a woman's genitals by a man's penis.

"The rape victims of May 1998 had rocks and glass shards inserted into their genitals. They were raped anally. They were raped with sharp and blunt objects," Sri said. "The kinds of rapes that occurred were varied. Such kinds of rapes are not regulated in the Criminal Code's article on rape."

According to Article 285 on rape, a convicted rapist faces a maximum jail term of 12 years.

"Also, according to our Criminal Code, a rape victim has to provide witnesses and evidence," Sri said. "The May 1998 rape victims are deeply traumatized. Also, how to find evidence [in the form of] semen that is 12 years old?"

She added that the Criminal Code also did not legally consider the psychological trauma caused by rape. "It also has nothing about special litigation procedures that can be adopted by traumatized rape victims."

At least 168 women, according to the commission, were gang raped during the rioting, some in front of family members. A majority of the rapes were committed in the open with Chinese-Indonesians in Jakarta, Medan, Palembang and Surabaya being especially targeted. The commission recorded 20 deaths as a result of the gang rapes.

Victims

Rahima said she would never forget the day in May 1998 when she found a woman lying naked on a street in Jati Selatan, East Jakarta, bruised and with her vagina covered in blood.

"Locals said she was not from our subdistrict, and that she was only dumped there," Rahima said. "At night, I could hear men out on the streets shouting, 'Where are the women?' I did not know who they were. I just kept running."

Tania, not her real name, told the Jakarta Globe that her two female cousins were raped after their shop-house in North Jakarta was looted.

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Shame on the rioters and their abhorrent acts of violating human rights! It tragically tarnished the noble efforts of the students who sacrificed their lives in the name of reformation, for the better of this nation. Right until this second, it's still unclear what the connection is between fighting for reformation and rioting (with the ethnic minority as the targets). Clearly there is(are) a certain people who orchestrated the riots, apparently in an effort to annihilate the minority groups who were seen as competitors or boon. Such a pity to realize that in this modern society, racial, religious and ethnic differences are still dividing the people all over the world.

glowo 11:31pm May 15, 2010

This is a travesty of justice. Rape is such a terrible crime. The damage done to the victims psyche is really irreparable; but to be gang raped in such sadistic ways is horrible. I can not believe that All

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involved have not been brought to justice. I am shocked that No attempt has even been made to punish the rapist or the people that hired them. Atrocious! EVERY Man in the Country should be filled with SHAME until these rapists and murders are apprehended!

"They looted the store. Then they raped two of my cousins and threw them on the lower floor of the shop-house, which was starting to burn. One other cousin of mine escaped. But she watched her sisters getting raped. She could do nothing."

Nancy Widjaja, chairwoman of the Chinese-Indonesian Association, said that if you paid for security, nobody would touch you.

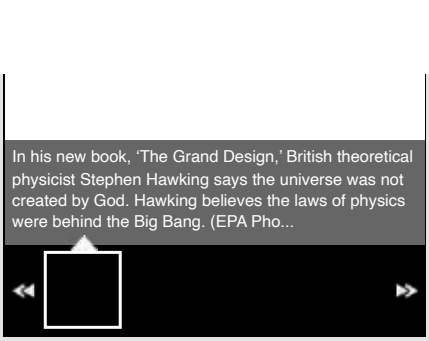
"If you did not pay your store was burned and your women raped. That is the reason why some parts of Mangga Dua were burned and some parts were not," Nancy said, referring to a North Jakarta area that was among the worst hit areas during the rioting.

"I don't know who these rioters were. They looked like soldiers with their crew cuts."

Paying for Safety

Records from Komnas Perempuan and a joint fact-finding team show that people had to pay between Rp 2 million and Rp 85 million for security when the riots hit the capital.

"In one case, people entered the house, looted it, raped the woman in front of her husband, killed the husband," commission deputy chairwoman Desti Murdijana said. "Other cases showed that the perpetrators were local criminals, some of whom confessed to receiving money to riot. Those accused of instigating the riots must be investigated. They must be brought to trial. We must not forget."



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